

The recently passed Medicare law requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish six premium support demonstration projects. These demonstration projects, sometimes referred to as comparative cost adjustment, must be established in 2010 and run through 2015. When established, they will essentially allow insurance companies to set the cost of prescription drugs provided for under Medicare at different levels throughout these six areas dependent upon geographic location, the density of those participating in the plan, and average age of those living in a given region. The selection criteria of the program make it likely that Florida would be one of the six selected sites.

A recent analysis done by Bush Administration actuaries last August confirmed that the "premium support" proposal originally included in the House Medicare bill would lead to higher fee-for-service premiums. That is, seniors and individuals with disabilities would have to spend more to remain in traditional Medicare.

Further, according to the Administration, within Florida, if premium support were enacted in Broward, Palm Beach, Miami-Dade, Brevard, Flagler, Hernando, Hillsborough, Indian River, Pasco, Pinellas, Seminole, or Volusia counties, premiums would increase for seniors in these counties wanting to remain in traditional Medicare. Realize, not all Florida counties were analyzed, and premium increases would be possible in other counties as well.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of the President's flawed Medicare bill, for the first time in history, Medicare beneficiaries living in different parts of the country and even within the same State would face different premiums. These wide variations in premiums do not exist in traditional Medicare today.

For Medicare's almost 40-year history, seniors and individuals with disabilities in traditional Medicare have paid the same premium, no matter where they live. Premium support would end this uniformity and exacerbate existing concerns about geographic inequity in Medicare.

Although premium support is possible in counties with managed care, seniors and individuals with disabilities in counties without managed care are not off the hook. That is because there are several provisions in the Medicare bill that are designed to encourage managed care companies to enter new areas. If those provisions are successful—and given the enormous amounts of money devoted to encouraging companies to enter new areas, they undoubtedly will be—even seniors in counties currently without managed care could be forced to pay more to remain in traditional Medicare.

Mr. Speaker, in its nearly 37-year history, Medicare has provided millions of American seniors with important health protections. With more than 34 percent of the people living in the district which I represent over the age of 55, Medicare is a critical tool in improving the lives of so many.

However, under current law, seniors in my district may find themselves paying more for prescription drugs than those living in a neighboring county. This is completely unacceptable. My constituents do not wish to be guinea pigs for a prescription drug plan that pits their well being against the pocketbooks of pharmaceutical executives. My constituents expect to pay fair and honest prices for their prescription

drugs. They expect to pay the same amount for their prescriptions as seniors in California, New York, and every other State in the Union. Even more, they expect to pay the same amount as other seniors in Florida. Current law provides no such guarantee to Florida seniors, and that is completely unacceptable.

My legislation fairly addresses this shortfall and ensures that Florida seniors do not fall victim to vicious Republican efforts to privatize Medicare.

I urge the House Leadership to bring my bill to the House floor for its immediate consideration, and I ask for my colleagues' support.

BISHOP MUNIB YOUNAN ADDRESSES CONGRESS ON THE PROSPECTS FOR ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE

HON. LOIS CAPPS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 2, 2004

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I recently traveled to Israel and the West Bank on a trip sponsored by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It was one of the busiest, most exciting, and thought-provoking weeks of my life, and it added immeasurably to my understanding of the complexities and challenges of Israeli and Palestinian life.

During this trip, I had the good fortune to spend a great deal of time with Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan, the Lutheran Bishop in Jerusalem. I was not only blessed by Bishop Younan's extraordinary hospitality, but benefited so much from his intimate knowledge of the region, the issues, and the key players on both sides.

Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago, Bishop Younan came to Capitol Hill for a discussion with several Members and staffers. It was indeed a compelling conversation. Since not all of my colleagues were able to meet the Bishop personally, I would like to publish in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a copy of his remarks. I look forward to continuing to work with all of my colleagues on the critical imperative to bring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to an end.

Dear Friends: Good afternoon. It is an honor and a privilege for me to be here. I am going to talk about peace building and reconciliation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I will do so from a Palestinian Christian perspective.

I am a Palestinian and a Christian, and I happen to be a Lutheran. My home is in Jerusalem. We Palestinian Christians have lived in the Holy Land since the very beginning of Christianity.

Today we Christians are not as many as we used to be, due to emigration. But nevertheless we Christians are an integral segment of the Palestinian people. My family became refugees in the 1948 war. I still carry a United Nations-issued refugee card. I wonder if I had grown up in the difficult circumstances of a refugee camp in Bethlehem, Jenin, Nablus or Ramallah and if the Lutheran Church had not embraced me and my family in Jerusalem, if I ever would have had the opportunity to serve the church as a pastor or a bishop.

Sometimes, I am asked what is the role of the Church in the midst of such an unjust and destructive situation? I believe the Church is called to be prophetic. That means the Church is to stand for justice, con-

demning every kind of injustice, spiral violence or oppression whoever the perpetrator may be. But at the same time, the Palestinian Church has a vision for justice and peace. This prophetic role emanates from Prophet Micah who taught us: "God has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

I wish to mention three particular circumstances of injustice:

(1) The Separation Wall being built by Israel.

The Separation Wall is intended to separate Israelis from Palestinians and is said to be a "security wall" for Israelis. I would submit to you that this wall is bound to create more hatred, more anger and more outrage because of the enormous losses and suffering it is creating among the Palestinian people. In my own Lutheran synod we are finding our people, pastors and churches being torn apart, separated by the Wall. The members of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in the Old City of Jerusalem and other Christians will find half of their congregations on one side and half on the other if the wall is built through a northern area of Jerusalem as is proposed. In Beit Sahour, 110 Palestinian Christian families are threatened to lose their houses because they happen to be near the separation wall that will be built. The Catholic bishops from the U.S.A. and Europe issued a statement on the 16th of January 2004 after their visit to Jerusalem by saying: "We have seen the devastating effect of the wall currently being built through the land and homes of Palestinian communities. This appears to be a permanent structure dividing families, isolating them from their farmland and their livelihoods, and cutting off religious institutions." His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, has said that "the Holy Land does not need walls, but bridges." We long in the Holy Land for bridges rather than walls!

The separation wall diminishes the hope held by Palestinians and Israelis that a negotiated solution resulting in two states, side by side, living in peace, is possible. The wall undermines the viability of a two state solution.

(2) A rapidly declining Palestinian economy.

The World Bank notes that 70 percent of Palestinians living under the military occupation are unemployed. And 65 percent of the population is living under the poverty line of \$2.00 USD per day. Another statistic recently released shows that the average per capita income of Palestinians is under \$1500.00, while the average per capita income of Israelis is more than \$18,000.00, again according to the World Bank. As you can imagine, this impoverishment has created major health and nutrition crises, as well as shattering the dignity of people and severely damaging the family unit and the whole society. The poverty has a devastating impact on our daily lives, but also undermines our hope for the future and reconciliation.

(3) Increasing isolation of Palestinian people in their towns and cities.

Most of our Palestinian cities and villages have become under siege. People are forced to remain within their town, hemmed in by checkpoints, roadblocks, tanks, armaments and Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldiers and now, increasingly, by the Separation Wall. Recently we have begun hearing that any foreign visitors or workers in Israel must apply for a permit to enter the West Bank, something that has been done in regard to the Gaza Strip for sometime. Such permits, even if issued, will severely limit the people who come into the Palestinian towns and villages to help people and churches. I would

like again to quote the report of the Catholic bishops: "We have had an experience of the frustration and humiliation undergone everyday by Palestinians at checkpoints, which impede them from providing for their families, reaching hospital, getting to work, attending their studies and visiting their relatives."

I am here carrying in my body the pains and suffering of my Palestinian people. But I am here with an olive branch in my hand, saying, "Enough for hatred, enough for occupation, enough for spiral violence, enough for revenge and counter-revenge; enough for stigmatization, demonization and dehumanization of the other. I say, enough for war! It is time for truth, justice and peace for all the people of our land."

Our prophetic task is to address the root cause of the Middle East problem: The occupation has to end. It is a sin against God and against humanity because it is depriving people of their rights and their dignity. Occupation is as destructive to the occupier, as it is to the occupied. As the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem stated in March 2002: "We believe that the Israeli security is dependent on the Palestinian freedom and justice. For this reason, we join our voices with every Israeli and Palestinian seeking for a just peace. We ask everyone to take the appropriate measures to stop further massacres or tragedies for our two peoples."

We want security for the Israelis, and freedom and justice for the Palestinians. But the security of Israel is dependent on the freedom of the Palestinians, and the justice of the Palestinians is dependent on the security of Israel. Once we recognize the symbiotic relationship between the two peoples, a just peace and reconciliation will become reality.

The prophetic voice of the Palestinian Church that seeks a just peace is a voice that believes in the future. We support a two state solution which means having the state of Israel and the Palestinian state within the 67 borders living side by side in peace, justice, equality and reconciliation with a shared Jerusalem. Here I would like to affirm the statement made by President George W. Bush on June 24, 2002, calling for a two-state solution with people living side by side. I also admire the president's call for a viable, contiguous Palestinian state. It is also our call that a just solution will be found to the problems of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees in accordance with the rule of law and international legitimacy.

No forms of peaceful settlement of the conflict will ever be realized unless the grass-roots will be reconciled with one another. In this task the three monotheistic religions are called to be the forerunners—preparing the way for reconciliation. At the moment both nations are polarized with both political and religious extremists from the three religions forcing the two peoples apart from each other. But those extremists must never kidnap the Middle East nor kidnap justice, peace and reconciliation. I believe that religion should be an instrument of peace and broker for justice. Religion is to call Palestinians and Israelis—Jews, Christians and Muslims—not to see God only in ourselves and our own religion, but also in the other's, in the people who are different from us. When we learn to see God in the other, then we can accept the humanity of the other. Once we accept the humanity of the other, then we accept the otherness of the other, and then mutually recognize each other's human, civil, religious, national and political rights. Only then the Holy Land will become the promised land of milk and honey for both Palestinians and Israelis.

The Palestinian Church also has a vision for the Palestinian society. The church lead-

ers are also calling for justice within our society based on respect of human and religious rights. We envision a modern democratic just civil society. This is the reason that we have been vocal in our joint ecumenical work to call for equality, freedom of religion, opinion and expression for every human being. But the Palestinian Church does not only talk, but walks the talk and reflects that either in the immersing basic constitution, or practices it in our educational, health and social institutions. If we take the Evangelical Lutheran Church as an example, we serve the needy regardless of gender, religion, confessional or political affiliation. Our schools raise up a new generation that is capable of building a Palestinian democratic modern civil society. We are teaching 3000 children in 5 schools. 37 percent of our students are Muslims. It is our aim to teach coexistence among Jews, Christians and Muslims, and we offer peace education and non-violent ways of dealing with the conflict. As it is written in our school in Bethlehem, "Violence is the tool of the incompetent." We also serve in hospitals. Our Augusta Victoria Hospital has been serving the Palestinian refugees for the last 55 years. Statistics show that 22,000 patients were treated in the last year. However, we are facing a problem of the employer's tax with the ministry of finance of the state of Israel. The Lutheran World Federation hopes that a solution will be found and that the agreement of tax exemption will continue for the sake of the services we render. Although we Christians are less than 2 percent of the total population, we serve 20 to 25 percent of the Palestinian people. And we urge you to see the significant role that the Christian Church is playing to create hope in a situation that often seems hopeless and to build a future with justice, peace and reconciliation in our country.

When God gave freedom and power to the United States of America through the struggles of many women and men such as Washington, Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr. and others, He did not give you liberation to keep it in the United States, but to help smaller nations, who are living in fear and injustice, to enjoy what God allowed you to enjoy. Our concern is the future of the Palestinian and Israeli children; they are entitled to live their lives in security, justice, freedom, respect for human rights and in peace as American children do.

As Representative Lois Capps made plans to visit us, I told her, "Come and see for yourself—see the whole story on the ground. Then judge for yourself." This is what I want to tell each of you today: "Come and see! You are very welcome. See and hear the whole story—the fears and hopes of both sides—and then make up your mind for yourself."

As I come to address you, I am not asking you to be pro-Palestinian nor to be pro-Israeli. I am asking you to be pro-humanity, pro-truth, pro-peace and pro-reconciliation. Because it is only then you help both peoples to find a dignified solution.

It is time to commit ourselves to move from statements to action and to change our warrior swords into peaceful ploughshares. We all can say, as a graffiti said in Ramallah: "Better the pains of peace, than the agonies of war and occupation."

Let us sing with King David: "Justice and peace must kiss each other" (Psalm 85: 10).

May the peace of the Lord fill our hearts and direct our ways.

TRIBUTE TO LEE MARSHALL

HON. ROBERT E. (BUD) CRAMER, JR.

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 2, 2004

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Lee Marshall on the release of her debut album, "Anchored." The National Children's Advocacy Center, located in Huntsville, hosted Lee's CD release party on Friday, February 27, 2004.

Mr. Speaker, Lee Marshall is a celebrated news anchor for WAFF NBC 48 in Huntsville. In addition to her role as the lead morning and noon news anchor, Lee is the host of a weekly segment on WAFF called "Kids to Love." On every episode of "Kids to Love," she highlights one of the five thousand kids that are in foster care and the five hundred that are waiting to be adopted in the State of Alabama. Every show is close to her heart because Lee herself was adopted. Lee is a shining example of what the love of a permanent family can do for a child's future success.

Lee also volunteers countless hours working with the American Cancer Society and the National Children's Advocacy Center. She is a strong supporter of the NCAC model and has lent her name to help educate others and raise awareness of the severity of child abuse.

Mr. Speaker, all of us in North Alabama are proud of Lee and the work that she has done for our area. I have admired her energy, compassion, and commitment to the community and on behalf of every one in North Alabama, I wish her the best of luck with her debut album.

TRIBUTE TO SYLVIA CLARK

HON. DIANA DeGETTE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 2, 2004

Ms. DeGETTE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the extraordinary life and accomplishments of a remarkable woman in Colorado. It is both fitting and proper that we recognize Sylvia Clark for her impressive record of civic leadership and invaluable service.

Sylvia was a dear friend and a stalwart leader who will be greatly missed. She lived her life on the front lines of progress and proved to be a powerful force in transforming the landscape of our State. Her indomitable spirit sustained her through many challenges and molded a life of genuine accomplishment.

Sylvia was born in St. Anthony, Idaho, and spent a good portion of her youth in Honduras where she saw first hand the impact of poverty on women and children. She studied nursing at Johns Hopkins University and went on to become a registered nurse, a certified nurse midwife, a certified obstetrics and gynecology nurse, and earned a master's degree in public administration. Sylvia came of age professionally at the time women were gaining their rights to forms of birth control previously considered illegal. She began an eminent career at Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains in 1967 and went on to become executive director where she guided the organization through turbulent political times and succeeded in building a preeminent reproductive health care agency, providing services to